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1.
Social Work

Modern, professional social work has existed for more than a century, and is practised in many countries all over the world.

There is a growing consensus among the workers, teachers, researchers, and policy makers comprising the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) on the aim, content, standards, and values of the social work profession, as well as in relation to its education and body of knowledge.

The joint global view on social work provided by IFSW and IASSW reflects the state of the profession, and will continue to influence the future development of it.

In this chapter I describe and explain the worldwide shared view of social work, based on major international core documents from the period 2000–2010 in which this view was established.

Close attention is paid to the aim and content of social work (Section 1.1), professional ethics (Section 1.2), social work education (Section 1.3), and the body of knowledge (Section 1.4).

Because this chapter functions as the foundation for the rest of the book, I will stay close to the original text of the core documents of IFSW and IASSW.

1.1 Aim and content

Since 1982, the IFSW has promoted and worked with a definition of social work. The latest definition as of 2000 is also supported by the IASSW. The profession of social worker is defined as follows:

> The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being.
>
> Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with

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> their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (IFSW 2000, p.1)

This definition provides a brief, general description of the social work profession. It answers the questions about what, how and why:

- *What?* Social workers enhance well-being in society by promoting social change, problem solving, empowerment, and liberation.
- *How?* They address the multiple, complex transactions between people and their environments through social interventions. These are goal-oriented efforts to influence the behaviour of people, groups, and organizations. These social interventions take various forms and are based on scientific theories of human behaviour and how institutions function (refer to Chapter 3).
- *Why?* The mission of social workers is 'to enable all people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction' (IFSW 2000, p.1). This mission was clearly derived from the fundamental principles of human rights and social justice.

According to the IFSW (2000), social work is an interrelated system of values, theory, and practice that enables people to enhance their well-being and that of the social environment in which they live: 'As such, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and communities they serve' (p.1).

'Development' and 'change' are inextricably bound up with life. When development stagnates, or when change is hard to achieve, people find themselves in a difficult or problematic situation. In such instances, the support of a social worker can make the difference. This is why knowledge of development and change processes, as well as the ability and skills to stimulate and support them, are an important part of the social worker's expertise. This is explored further in Chapter 3.

The support and assistance of social work is both object-oriented (problem solving and providing means for the realization of it) and subject-oriented (empowering clients to act). The social worker must also target actors who might be influencing the client insofar as they are part of the problem and/or the solution. To realize this, the social worker must be able to operate on varied levels with a variety of

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people (Chapter 2), fulfilling different tasks, and playing different roles dependent upon the situation (Chapter 4).

Social workers are confronted directly with the consequences of the way people interact as well as with the underlying values and standards of the involved individuals. This means that the professional expertise is of a mixed nature: instrumental (methods and techniques) on the one hand, and normative (interpretation, objectives, approach) on the other. Therefore, in all situations, with all sorts of people, the social worker must be aware of differing values and standards; be able to analyse the persons, groups, and organizations involved; and choose and implement an appropriate and effective way of working toward a solution.

The normative nature has always been characteristic of social work. As the IFSW explains:

> Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Since its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on meeting human needs and developing human potential. Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion. (IFSW 2000, p.1)

In this respect, 'social work addresses the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society. It responds to crises and emergencies as well as to everyday personal and social problems' (IFSW 2000, p.1).

1.2 Professional ethics

Due to the normative character of the profession, as explained in the previous paragraph, social work requires not only the ability but also the commitment to act ethically as essential qualities offered to those who use social work services. In many countries there are (national) professional codes for social workers. These codes contain shared values and standards, serving as a guideline for the professional conduct of the social worker.

Since 1994, there has been an international professional code with principles and standards for all social workers and the institutions in which they are employed (IFSW 1994). Ten years later, this document was updated with a revised Statement of Principles, based on the

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international definition of social work as starting point (IFSW and IASSW 2004a).

The joint IASSW and IFSW Statement aims 'to encourage social workers across the world to reflect on the challenges and dilemmas that face them and make ethically informed decisions about how to act in each particular case (IFSW and IASSW 2004a)' Some of these problem areas include (IFSW and IASSW 2004a, p.1):

- the fact that the loyalty of social workers is often in the middle of conflicting interests
- the fact that social workers function as both helpers and controllers
- the conflicts between the duty of social workers to protect the interests of the people with whom they work and societal demands for efficiency and utility
- the fact that resources in society are limited.

The Statement of Principles refers to seven well-known, internationally accepted and recognized human rights Declarations and Conventions. These are:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO Convention 169).

These international documents are particularly relevant to social work practice and action. They function as a legitimate framework for social workers.

Two principles are elaborated upon in the international definition of social work: human rights and social justice.

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The paragraph on *human rights* begins with the statement that 'social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this,' meaning that social workers 'should uphold and defend each person's physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being' (IFSW and IASSW 2004a, p.2).

Therefore, social workers are called to adhere to the following (p.2):

1. Respecting the right to self-determination – Social workers should respect and promote people's right to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.
2. Promoting the right to participation – Social workers should promote the full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.
3. Treating each person as a whole – Social workers should be concerned with the whole person, within the family, community, societal and natural environments, and should seek to recognise all aspects of a person's life.
4. Identifying and developing strengths – Social workers should focus on the strengths of all individuals, groups and communities and thus promote their empowerment.

The responsibility to stimulate social justice in society as well as in relation to the people with whom they work, means that social workers focus on (pp.2–3):

1. Challenging negative discrimination – Social workers have a responsibility to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin colour, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation, or spiritual beliefs.
2. Recognise diversity – Social workers should recognize and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practice, taking account of individual, family, group and community differences.
3. Distributing resources equitably – Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.

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4. Challenging unjust policies and practices – Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful.
5. Working in solidarity – Social workers have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation, and to work towards an inclusive society.

Observing human rights and stimulating social justice directly affects social relations and the established regime in an organization, community, or country. This is much easier to accomplish in a social environment or a society that accommodates the discipline by offering space and facilities for social work. In this respect, there are noticeable differences between countries based upon living standards, culture, levels of education, ideology, religion, and the democratic nature of both local and national administrations.

In countries with an autocratic regime, where certain groups are favoured above others, and where criticism and opposition are not permitted, social workers have little or no space to effectively do their work.

It seems obvious that social work will prosper in countries with democratic constitutions that guarantee freedom of speech and association, public debate, secret ballots during an election, and minority rights. Thus, 'democracy is the belief in freedom and equality between people, or a system of government based on this belief, in which power is either held by elected representatives or directly by the people themselves' (Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2011).

It is rather ironic that in countries where social work is deeply needed, the social and political conditions for this necessary profession either do not exist or are constrained to the point of ineffectiveness.

In this respect, IFSW and IASSW should stimulate and support international surveys into the relation between the democratic nature of a community (or country) and the extent and quality of the social provisions, social benefits, social institutions, and the number of social workers being part of it. The outcome can play a role in the policy of international bodies such as the UN, the EU, the World Bank, and the IMF toward individual countries.

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The final portion of *Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles* contains 12 general guidelines on professional conduct (IFSW and IASSW 2004a, pp.3–4). These guidelines are as follows:

1. Social workers are expected to develop and maintain the required skills and competence to do their job.
2. Social workers should not allow their skills to be used for inhumane purposes, such as torture or terrorism.
3. Social workers should act with integrity. This includes not abusing the relationship of trust with the people using their services, recognizing the boundaries between personal and professional life, and not abusing their position for personal benefit or gain.
4. Social workers should act in relation to the people using their services with compassion, empathy and care.
5. Social workers should not subordinate the needs or interests of people who use their services to their own needs or interests.
6. Social workers have a duty to take [the] necessary steps to care for themselves professionally and personally in the workplace and in society, in order to ensure that they are able to provide appropriate services.
7. Social workers should maintain confidentiality regarding information about people who use their services. Exceptions to this may only be justified on the basis of a greater ethical requirement (such as the preservation of life).
8. Social workers need to acknowledge that they are accountable for their actions to the users of their services, the people they work with, their colleagues, their employers, the professional association and to the law, and that these accountabilities may conflict.
9. Social workers should be willing to collaborate with the schools of social work in order to support social work students to get practical training of good quality and up to date practical knowledge.
10. Social workers should foster and engage in ethical debate with their colleagues and employers and take responsibility for making ethically informed decisions.

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11. Social workers should be prepared to state the reasons for their decisions based on ethical considerations, and be accountable for their choices and actions.
12. Social workers should work to create conditions in employing agencies and in their countries where the principles of this statement and those of their own national code (if applicable) are discussed, evaluated and upheld.

The Statement of Principles is considered to provide a common ethical framework for social work. Conversely, national codes are more particular: 'Social workers should act in accordance with the ethical code or guidelines current in their country. These will generally include more detailed guidance in ethical practice specific to the national context' (p.3).

1.3 Social work education

As mentioned in the Introduction, one needs to perform social work in a proper and effective way, one needs a long-term education of a median or higher level in order to acquire theoretical and methodoligical knowledge; to develop and maintain the necessary skill sets; to gain practical experience; and to form one's own professional attitude and worldview. Schools and studies of social work are nationally organized and educational endeavours can vary from a two-year diploma programme at a further education or community college to a Bachelors or Masters degree which will require three to four or five years, respectively, of intense study at university. In countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, social work study is positioned within universities (mostly in 'Schools of Social Work').

In countries with a dualistic system of higher education, with universities on the one hand and institutions of higher applied sciences on the other, most social workers are educated in the latter. This distinction has positive and negative consequences. In universities, more emphasis is placed on theory and research in the academic tradition, while in colleges or universities of applied sciences which exist elsewhere in Europe, the focus is on arts, methods, and practice.

From an international perspective, IFSW and IASSW promote clear, joint standards for social work education. In *Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession* (IFSW and IASSW 2004b) these organizations established nine standards based upon the international definition of social work and on 13 core purposes of social

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work. I discuss the core purposes in Chapter 4, Section 1. Here my particular focus is on the educational standards.

The Global Standards focus upon the following issues:

1. The core purpose and mission of the school
2. Programme objectives and outcomes
3. Programme curricula, including field education
4. Core curricula
5. Professional staff
6. Social work students
7. Structure, administration, governance and resources
8. Cultural and ethnic diversity, and gender inclusiveness
9. Values and ethical codes of conduct.

These Global Standards establish values and principles meant to stimulate the quality of social work education and the dialogue about it. Or, in other words: 'The document reflects global standards that schools of social work should consistently aspire towards, which (collectively, and if met) would actually provide for quite sophisticated levels of social work education and training' (IFSW and IASSW 2004b, p.17).

The differences in development stages of social work between various countries are taken into account:

> The extent to which schools of social work meet the global standards will depend on the developmental needs of any given country/region and the developmental status of the profession in any given context, as determined by unique historical, socio-political, economic and cultural contexts. (IFSW and IASSW 2004b, p.17).

As examples, I examine the situation in the field of social work education in the Netherlands, Canada, Ireland, and Poland.

The Netherlands is a small European country with a well-developed system of social work and a long tradition in educating social workers that dates back to 1899 when the first school of social work was established in Amsterdam.

Today, social work in the Netherlands is practised on four levels, namely (NIZW Beroepsontwikkeling 2006):

A. Assistant

B. Practising

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C. Design and implementation

D. Direction and implementation.

While two years of tertiary education is necessary for assistant positions (A) in social work, diplomas of three and four year studies at a tertiary level provide entrance to lower positions in practice (B). For design and implementation (C) a Bachelors degree (four years of study) is necessary. For direction and implementation (D), a Bachelors or Masters degree is required.

In the four-year bachelor education for social work, aspiring social workers qualify themselves in six clusters of competencies. These are:

1. Orienting, analysing, defining
2. Methodological, change-oriented social interventions
3. Working in a company or organization
4. The person of the professional worker as instrument
5. Developing research
6. Learning processes.

Another example is that of Canada. In this country, a two-year Diploma for Social Service Workers at the college level or a four-year Bachelors Degree of Social Work at the university level is required to become a social worker. Following another year of intense study in a university setting, a student can obtain a Masters Degree of Social Work.

In the Republic of Ireland social workers undertake either a four-year bachelors degree which is offered at two universities or they can qualify through postgraduate awards following an appropriate undergraduate degree in Social Studies or Social Sciences. In Ireland 'social work', which operates in a legally defined setting of duties and responsibilities, is distinguished from social care work, which traditionally has been undertaken by practitioners who may or may not be formally educated. However, social care work is now regulated and requires an Ordinary Degree in Social Studies or Social Care (Level 7) for professional registration. This takes three years to complete.

In Poland, one of the Eastern European countries with a communist past, social workers are educated at schools of social work offering a two-and-a-half-year diploma. After the fall of Communism in 1989, it became possible to study social work at universities offering three-year bachelor studies in either their sociology or pedagogy departments.

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For the education of social workers, the IFSW and IASSW function in a supportive and facilitative role in the local implementation of the aforementioned global standards. To realize this, there is a need for clear mechanisms of communication across national and/or regional social work educators' associations and IASSW. Such communication could be facilitated by developing a data bank containing the details and programmes of member schools, and of national and/or regional standards and systems of quality assurance and accreditation. Such information may be shared on an international level upon request and/or via the websites of IFSW and IASSW. It is hoped that this information sharing would provide the impetus for schools of social work to aspire toward the global standards of professional social work education and training (IFSW and IASSW 2004b, pp.17–18).

With the acceptance of global standards for the education and training of social workers, the profession made an important step forward in its professionalization and profiling process. This has had, and will continue to have, positive effects on the position of social workers and the quality of their services.

1.4 Body of knowledge

During the 20th century, professional social work began collecting and distributing its expertise. Because of the specific, applied nature of the profession as well as a reliance upon theories and methods mainly developed in the USA and UK, researchers and workers often draw (and drew) from the same sources.

The dominant position of these two countries in social work is a direct result of the prevalence of the English language. More specifically, the USA has maintained its hegemony within the social work profession due to its reputation as a positive destination for immigration, which has created a large and differentiated international network of personal, professional, and business contacts.

Mel Gray and Stephen Webb (2009, 2010), who have taken up the role of 'bibliographers of social work', collected, ordered, and selected theories and methods that have continuously had an impact on thinking and operating within social work. This was a huge undertaking, considering the long history of (professional) social work. In 2009, they published an overview of 'the key ideas of authors who have contributed significantly to theoretical discussions shaping social work in recent years' (2009, p.8). In 2010, they followed with their new masterpiece

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International Social Work. According to Gray and Webb, this four-volume set is meant 'to represent the diversity of viewpoints that exist in social work' and is offered as 'a major reference in social work' to researchers, students, practitioners, and policy makers (2010, p.xxvi).

The goal of these theoretical works is, however, not comparable to the goal of the book you are reading now. Here I focus on the current state of social work as it is reflected in the international definition of social work. I limit myself to well-known approaches and theories that are directly connected with, or are illustrative of, the subjects and concepts related to the international definition. This is a different, more practical approach that aligns with the educational purposes of my work: writing a study book and introduction for professionals.

According to the international definition document (IFSW 2000, p.1), social work bases its methodology 'on a systematic body of evidence-based knowledge derived from research and practice evaluation, including local and indigenous knowledge specific to its context.' The interaction between person and social environment is crucial for social work: 'it recognizes the complexity of interactions between human beings and their environment, and the capacity of people both to be affected by and to alter the multiple influences upon them including bio-psychosocial factors' (p.1). It is obvious that social work 'draws on theories of human development and behaviour and social systems to analyze complex situations and to facilitate individual, organizational, social and cultural changes' (p.1).

There is not always complete synthesis between knowledge obtained through professional practice and that discovered through scientific research. One reason for the practice-research gap is that practitioners deal with situations that are unique and idiosyncratic, while research deals with regularities and aggregates. The translation between the two is often imperfect. A hopeful development for bridging this gap is the compilation in many practice fields of collections of "best practices", largely taken from research findings, but also distilled from the experience of respected practitioners (Wikipedia 2012, p.1).

Additionally, I would like to note that the disparity between professional practice and scientific theory is bridged by practice-oriented professional literature, containing applied theory and methods for the many specializations in social work. In fact, most social workers with a diploma or bachelors degree gain(ed) the bulk of their theoretical and methodological knowledge in this form.

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By taking the different subjects outlined in the international definition of social work as a reference (see Section 1.1), and by relying upon the most well-known approaches and theories of social work textbooks, the following approaches and theories form the main areas of the body of knowledge of social work:

- Humanistic Psychology, with Maslow and his motivation theory as the most significant representative.
- Holistic Approach, as a significant characteristic of social work, according to IFSW as well as many authors and social workers.
- Ecological Systems Theory of developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner.
- Theory of Communicative Action: Life World and System World (Habermas).
- Planned Change Theory.

Besides these well-known, widespread approaches and theories, there are many others used in social work, such as anti-oppressive, radical, educational, and gender specific approaches and theories. Most of them, however, are less known, and have a limited scope because of their specific, context bound, premature or otherwise limited character. New, promising approaches are 'Constructive social work' (Parton and O'Byrne 2000) and 'Integrative theories', like the one of Donkers (2010) that I discuss in Section 3.4.5.

Contained below is a brief description of five well-known and important knowledge components of social work: their content and application are described in greater detail in Chapter 2.

1.4.1 Humanistic psychology

Because social work is based on humanitarian and democratic ideals, social workers are concerned with human welfare and social reform. They are keen on accommodating needs, and developing human potential. Therefore, the use of need and motivation theories provided by humanistic psychology is obvious. This branch in psychology tries to exceed the limitations of depth psychology (man as determined by unconscious motivations) and of behaviourism (influencing behaviour by rewards and punishment) by developing an approach in which man is considered as the holder of endless possibilities. By focusing on an

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overarching approach, as opposed to the single facets of attempting to manage the unconscious or viewing humans as being led by only reward and punishment, one can better explore human potential.

Humanistic psychology includes several approaches to counselling and therapy. The aim of humanistic therapy is to help the client develop a stronger and more healthy sense of himself or herself, also called self-actualization. Other well-known methods used in social work are gestalt therapy, encounter groups, sensitivity training, marital and family therapies, and, of course, the client-centred therapy of Carl Rogers. Also, co-counselling (as a self-help approach) is utilized in social work.

The developmental theory of Abraham Maslow, emphasizing a hierarchy of needs and motivations (Maslow 1943, 1987; Maslow and Lowery 1998), belongs to the body of knowledge of almost all social workers. In Maslow's theory, people's behaviour is very much led by satisfying needs. Maslow identifies five needs that lead in ascending order to the stadium of 'self-actualization': biological and physical needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and finally self-actualization.

1.4.2 Holistic approach

The 'universal holistic focus' of social work (IFSW 2000, p.2) lies in the complex interaction between clients and their social environment, concerning different aspects of everyday life and on various scales. Change-oriented interventions by a social worker and/or client can only be effective if problems are analysed and handled in their mutual dependency and with regard to their specific nature.

In his article, 'Toward a common paradigmatic home: Social work in the 21st century', Richard Ramsay (1999) confirms the holistic focus of social work on the interaction between individual being and social environment. According to the author, this has been a central element in the body of knowledge of social work that has placed it at the head of the social sciences for many years. Ramsay praises social work for this feat:

> The recognition by social work pioneers of complex person-in-environment systems, and their intuitive sense of a holistic, deep ecological worldview shows them to be conceptual thinkers well ahead of their time. The value of their early insights has had to wait for an acknowledged science paradigm to emerge and receive public acceptance.

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1.4.3 Ecological Systems Theory

Understanding the complex interaction between the individual and his social environment is the object of all social sciences, especially sociology, anthropology, psychology, and economics. One of the most influential and useful theories remains the Ecological Systems Theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1994). Viewed as a leading scientist in the field of developmental psychology, Bronfenbrenner successfully defended a new concept of 'development' in direct opposition to the classical school of psychological thought. He defines 'development' as the developing conception of an individual in his ecological environment, his relation to that environment, and the individual's capacity to discover, change, or retain the qualities of that environment.

Whether or not social scientists are willing to provide Bronfenbrenner with theoretical credit, elements of his Ecological Systems Theory are used in many forms and variations in social work publications.

1.4.4 Communicative action: Life World and System World

It is through communication that people interact, (mis)understand one another, construct realities, and/or change those realities if necessary or desired. Training in communication is therefore an important part of social work education.

Most clients of social workers are in a vulnerable, dependent position. Social workers are often confronted with (mis)communication in relationships between people having unequal positions and differences in power and wealth.

When differences in power and dependence are involved, and the communication and/or the context in which it occurs is dominated by one of the actors (an individual, a group, an organization, or an institution), social workers need a framework to understand what is happening in order to find solutions and help clients to cope with the situation.

Such a framework is offered by Jürgen Habermas (1981), representative of the Frankfurter Schule on the Theory of Communicative Action. This theory is driven by a belief in the power of reason, embodied in universal pragmatics and guided by inter-subjective recognition of three valid claims: truth, rightness and sincerity.

According to Houston (2009), 'communicative action occurs when two or more individuals reach a consensual understanding on goals and

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actions. This form of speech acts as a coordinating mechanism facilitating the expression of all three validity claims and reasoned argument' (p.15).

In reality, it is challenging to achieve such a situation when actors take different positions with competing interests in mind. Social workers know and recognize this very well. In his analysis, Habermas identifies two core spheres: the Life World and the System World. Although they join together in practice, they can be separately analysed, which will be the subject of Section 2.5.

1.4.5 Planned Change Theory

To influence the interaction between clients and their social environment, social workers use a wide range of skills, techniques, and methods on various levels. According to the IFSW, 'social work interventions range from primarily person-focused psychosocial processes to involvement in social policy, planning and development' (IFSW 2000, p.2).

Efforts of social workers are directed toward goal-oriented change of behaviour of persons, groups, organizations, and institutions in society, with collective and individual well-being as the final objective. For planning and support of change processes, social workers make use of Planned Change theories and problem-solving models.

Planned change is discussed in Chapter 3. I explain the theory and relate it to problem-solving models, interventions, methods, and strategies. As most social workers do, I consider the Theory of Planned Change as a panoply of instruments and techniques to initiate and support change processes in addition to one or more of the normative approaches that are common in social work. I also pay attention to current theoretical developments by discussing the outlines of a new integrative approach, stimulated by the revival of holism in social sciences. In this respect I discuss Gerard Donkers' new integrated theory of changing based on the concept of self-regulation.

1.4.6 Tasks, roles, and functions in society

According to the IFSW (2000, p.1) interventions in social work include 'counselling, clinical social work, group work, social pedagogical work, and family treatment and therapy' as well as efforts to facilitate people with the things they require to cope with their situation and/or to solve their problems. The interventions of social work also include 'agency administration, community organization and engaging in social and

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political action to impact social policy and economic development' (IFSW 2000, p.2).

The many tasks and roles of social work in various fields for different groups of clients are ordered and embedded in their professional context in Chapter 4.

The position and functions of social work in society are the subject of Chapter 5, in which I also discuss and clarify the mutual dependencies between social problems, social infrastructure, social work, social policy, and citizen participation.

Drawing 1 The social worker with tool box, global ideals and tasks (helping people to fit in society, as a piece in the puzzle) (© Henny Feijer)

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2. Surviving – Needs and Social Conditions

As described in the international definition, social work is focused on the interaction between the individual and his or her social environment. In practice, the profession makes use of system and behaviour theories from social sciences to better understand the social realities that social workers are confronted with, whether directly or indirectly (via their clients).

Well known and frequently used theoretical concepts and models in social work originate from Humanistic Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Ecological Systems Theory, and the Theory of Communicative Action. Key concepts from these models are: fulfilment of needs, self-realization, life conditions, and power and dependency. Also important is the interaction between these components, and the influence on communication between individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions.

In this chapter I work through these well-known fundamentals within the body of knowledge of social work. I explore their significance within social work practice: a practice characterized by a holistic approach of reality in which these models and concepts are used by social workers to support their clients. As a practical summary, the last section (2.6) contains a basic step-by-step description of social work.

2.1 Unequal chances

If you are born in a wealthy, developed country, you have at least 18 years to mature and become an 'adult'; that is, to become a citizen with all the

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rights and duties that come with it. This was not always the case. Late in 18th century Europe, interest and concern began to grow regarding specific needs and circumstances that children were facing. This lasted until well into the 20th century, before the 'right to be a child' was generally accepted and realized in all its worth. This was the case at least in wealthy, developed countries.

If you are born in a prosperous country, most of the time the cradle, clothes, toys, and the baby room are already waiting for you as soon as you come home from the hospital. Additionally, social, medical, and educational services are available for you as soon as they are needed. Babies from affluent countries are protected and sheltered from before their birth, and land, literally and metaphorically, in a 'made-up bed'. In many countries, however, this is not the case. How you are born, if and how well you are fed, sheltered, and cared for, how long your childhood lasts, and how great your chances are of a successful education and career all depend on your individual circumstances.

At the beginning of the 21st century, countries including Sweden, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Canada, and Australia are trendsetters in many respects. Administration, health care, education, and social care, in various ways, are taking into account the succession of life stages, from infant, to toddler, child, and adolescent, to adult and elderly. There are many special provisions, services, and regulations for children of all ages, as there are for adults of all ages. Parents with young children have tax reductions and can apply for all sorts of allowances and subsidies. Working parents are also entitled to maternity leave and parental leave.

In rich, developed countries, a single human life is of relatively high value; important enough to invest in it, and spend a substantial amount of money to save, heal, or improve it. In countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and Sweden, more than half of the gross national product is spent on the collective sector. This includes environmental infrastructure, safety, social security, education, health care, social care, and various financial supports for citizens with special needs, as well as the administration involved in planning and implementation.

Because these countries are constitutional states with a parliamentary democracy, a free press, and civil rights, the possibilities for corruption are limited; public means are generally spent on what they are meant for. Citizens of these countries actually see and experience the benefits and returns for the taxes and premiums they pay. This is an important fact, because it stimulates acceptance and the willingness to pay taxes, and provides support for public institutions and services. This is in

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the interest of all, because everyone makes use of public services and supports at some point in their lives. Unfortunately, not all people live in countries with such resources. There is still a vast amount of inequality and injustice in the world, despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, despite the accumulation of wealth in many countries, and despite the availability of advanced technology to create liveable circumstances for all people in the world.

A stallholder at a market in India, with whom I discussed the differences between his country and mine, summarized our discussion as follows: 'You are lucky that you are born in the Netherlands.' However, this is only a part of the truth. Social inequality not only exists *between* countries, but also *within* countries, no matter whether the country is wealthy or poor. In almost all countries in the world, it (still) impacts individuals if they are born a child of lower class, middle class, or higher class parents. Social descent is an important influencing factor for a child's chances of success in life.

But everything is relative, including wealth and poverty. Because the standard of living can vary widely between countries, the life circumstances of a poor citizen in a wealthy, developed country look very different from the poverty experienced by a poor citizen of an impoverished, less developed country.

2.2 Needs and desires

There are notable differences and similarities between humans. An essential similarity is that we are all of the same biological species, constructed in the same way. To survive, people must fulfil basic needs for oxygen, water, food, shelter, clothing, sleep, sex, and reproduction. However, a human being is more than purely a biological entity. Humans have a conscience and a personality, and are also relational and spiritual beings. These unique human characteristics demand that needs beyond the basics must also be met in order to live a humane life.

2.2.1 Hierarchy of Needs

According to Abraham Maslow, an exponent of the Humanistic School of Psychology, the fulfilment of needs motivates people to act, to develop behaviour, and to construct and maintain organizations. Maslow first published his Hierarchy of Needs in 1943 in an article for *Psychological*

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Review, entitled 'A Theory of Human Motivation'. In 1954 he published his book *Motivation and Personality*.

Maslow distinguishes between five different types of needs, and places them in an ascending order. The lowest level is that of biological and physiological needs. This is followed by the need for safety, then belonging and love needs. Esteem needs are next, and on the highest level is the need for self-actualization. In his later work, Maslow referred to additional needs of cognitive and aesthetic character, and to 'transcendence' as a higher form of self-actualization (Maslow and Lowery 1998). Although Maslow did not extend his own model with these three needs, there were others who did.

Figure 2.1 Hierarchy of Needs (based on Maslow 1954)

1. The needs on the lowest level are known as *biological and physiological needs*. They include the fulfilment of fundamental needs to survive, such as oxygen, hydration, food, clothes, shelter, sleep, and sex. If these needs cannot be satisfied sufficiently, existence is endangered and development toward higher levels of satisfaction is blocked.
2. *Safety needs* are needs for protection, security, order, law, limits, and stability. They concern the creation and presence of 'basic

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trust', crucial in childhood for development of self-confidence as well as trust in others in later stages of life.

3. The level of *belongingness and love needs* encompasses giving and receiving love and affection, understanding, and acceptance. Individuals need to identify with a group in order to feel as though they belong. Such a group could be one's family, friends, peers, co-workers, or simply a group of people that an individual can identify with and relate to. Membership of a group allows an individual to feel a sense of belonging, as well as an opportunity to practise appropriate social behaviour.
4. *Esteem needs* are associated with self-confidence, appreciation by others, and the desire for freedom and independence. Key concepts are: respect, acceptance, recognition as a person, recognition of qualities, prestige, and acquiring a position in a group to which one belongs or wants to belong. Self-esteem is fundamental in establishing the ability to appreciate others. To satisfy esteem needs, there are also specific cognitive needs (learning, exploring, discovering) to fulfil, as well as aesthetic needs (creativity and beauty in all its natural and cultural forms).
5. On the highest level, *self-actualization* is the desire to reach one's fullest potential and to actually achieve that potential. It is an instinctual need to make the most of your abilities. If lower needs are satisfied, an individual can develop fully without feeling pressure to fight for a position, free from fear of the disapproval of others. Based on the achieved self-esteem, one can realize his or her full potential. This opens one up to a possible state of transcendence, meaning exceeding the boundary of common observation or consciousness, going beyond oneself. One comes to realize that the external world, as it appears, is not the only truth, but is based on a deeper reality, where one's own self is also based. Transcending occurs in many forms and on various levels.

With modifications, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is still valid today. It helps, for example, with the raising of children, and contributes to a greater understanding of their development toward maturity. It is also useful for motivation and further development of adults in the various stages of their lives.

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At the basic level, children are provided with regular nourishment and care. On the second level, self-reliance and trust in others is formed through having safety, security, order, and stability in a child's care. The third level is about belonging, love, acceptance of the child, and identifying with groups. At the fourth level, experiencing success and independence is important, at school as well as at home. These four levels are necessary to ascend to the higher level, which has the potential to be realized in adulthood.

The lowest four levels of needs are characterized by Maslow as *deficiency motivators*, whereas the needs on the highest level are *growth needs*. According to Maslow, only a small percentage of mankind will reach the highest level of self-actualization and transcendence. Most people will remain on the lower levels of the hierarchy of needs. As long as people have to struggle to maintain or recover self-confidence and need fulfilment, they will have less energy to use for developing abilities and skills to reach their fullest potential.

Thanks to increasing wealth, and the growing number of prosperous countries, more people than ever before are reaching higher levels of satisfaction and fulfilment. As a result, there is a growing interest in and need for self-development, through spirituality, creativity, and arts. People's focus has shifted from the external world to the internal world, within themselves. As such, individual enjoyment and positive experiences become values, and fit well in the ongoing process of individualization around the world.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is neither complete nor exhaustive. Nevertheless, it is a clear, recognizable, useful, and workable model for understanding, explaining, facilitating, steering, and managing human behaviour on various levels, in different fields, and in many situations, especially also for social workers.

2.2.2 Motivation theories

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a well-known, frequently used model, not only in social work, but also in organization psychology, public administration, business administration, and management studies. For this reason it is not by coincidence that in these fields especially, the development of motivation theories has continued.

Marcel Nieuwenhuis (2012) gives a clear overview of contemporary motivation theories. According to him, 'motivating employees is a very complex and not fully understood psychological issue. In modern psychological theory, classical thinking has made room for a more

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integrated approach in which motivation from different angles is the object of research' (Nieuwenhuis 2012, p.1 translation WB). When it comes to motivating employees, the question is how motivated behaviour can be stimulated, strengthened, maintained, reduced, and extinguished. According to Nieuwenhuis, it essentially concerns the conditions which stimulate employees to become and stay self-driven and competent. He describes the most important contemporary contributions to the needs and motivation theories through four different approaches:

- *Personal qualities approach.* Authors including Miller and McClelland focus on the personality of the employee. Which underlying personal qualities and motives determine the creation and continuation of motivation?
- *Outcomes approach.* Vroom and Adams concentrate on the expectations of employees toward contributions and outcomes. The motivation will rise if employees expect that their efforts will result in the desired outcomes.
- *Goal approach.* An employee can be motivated by setting goals that are clear, accepted, feasible, and challenging. Based on this assumption, Bandura designed his Goal Setting Theory, and Skinner developed his Theory of Behaviour Modification.
- *Tasks approach.* Authors including Deci and Hackman and Oldham put emphasis on the content of the tasks of the employee. Tasks are crucial in the motivation of employees to participate in an activity. The research is focused on autonomy, competence, and individual responsibility. (Nieuwenhuis 2010, p.130)

Figure 2.2 gives an overview of these four contemporary approaches of needs and motivation.

The different approaches can be described as follows (summary of an overview by Nieuwenhuis 2010, pp.131–141):

Characteristics: Miller and McClelland

In the SIMA-approach (System for the Identification of Motivation Aptitude) of Miller, motivational, natural talents of an employee are identified, with emphasis on their manifestation and application. It is all about what an employee, deliberately or not, strives for in his work. The motivation pattern, as a result, is the basis for the employee's behaviour. Working with behaviour patterns places demands on management and

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communication, taking natural talents as a starting point. McClelland takes four core motivators as the starting point: power, performance, attachment, and avoidance. If one of these motives dominates, it will have definite results on preferred activities. For example, someone who is attracted to power seeks power situations. It is essential first to know what motivates people, and then connect them with appropriate work based on their available natural talents.

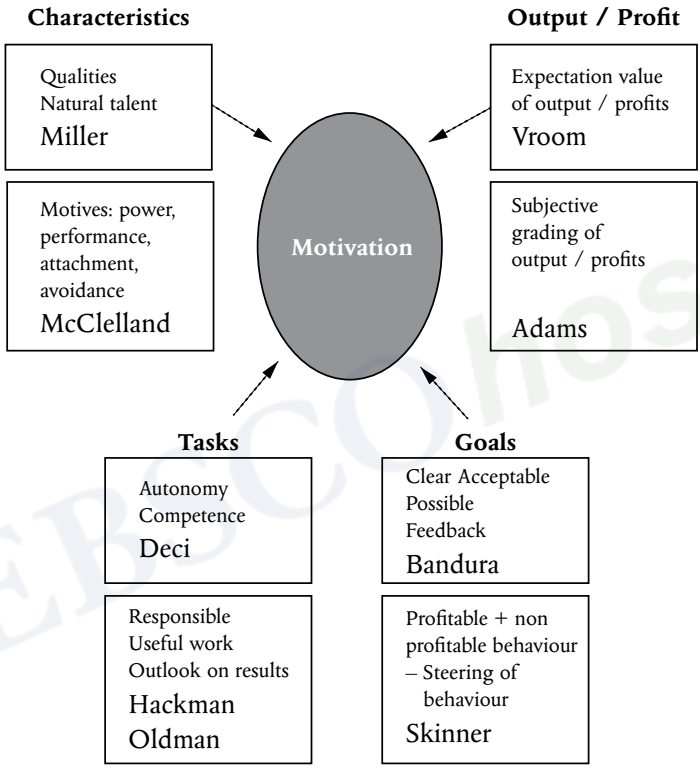

Figure 2.2 Overview of contemporary motivation theories in management (based on Nieuwenhuis 2010, translated by W. Blok)

Expectations of output: Vroom and Adams

This approach is aimed at motivational aspects of change. In the motivation model of Vroom – the Expectancy Theory – motivation is determined by the 'expectation' that work leads to a specific 'output' with a certain 'value in the form of a profit'. Based on these expectations, the employee makes an effort. Employees are motivated to perform and

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continue their job if their expectation leads to the desired results/profit. It is necessary to make and keep the relationship between efforts and output clear, with communication as an important factor for doing so.

The Equity Theory of Adams is similar to Vroom's theory. Where Vroom names output and contributions in more objective terms, Adams emphasizes the subjectivity of observations. Subjective views measure the total amount of contributions, and results/output are considered as fair or reasonable by a person. An employee may be satisfied with the balance between contribution and output. However, upon comparison with the results/output of a more experienced or productive colleague, initial satisfaction can change into dissatisfaction.

Goal setting: Bandura and Skinner

The setting of goals, as in Bandura's Goal Setting Theory, and management by objectives as predecessor, are commonly accepted approaches in everyday practice. Individuals must begin with the setting of concrete and clear goals. These goals have to be accepted by all parties involved. Goals need to be challenging and difficult, but not impossible to realize. It is also necessary to keep employees informed about the achievement of the goals that have been set. Feedback is vital as long as it is constructive and given at the appropriate times. This is especially true at moments in which changing or modifying behaviour is possible and productive.

A more clinical variant is Skinner's Behaviour Modification Theory. Briefly, the principle is that profitable behaviour is repeated, and non-constructive behaviour is avoided. Research has shown that intermittent rewarding of behaviour has the most powerful effect. For example, giving a reward in half of the cases is likely to be more effective than giving a reward in every instance.

Content of the task: Deci, Hackman and Oldham

This category of concepts and theories concentrates on the content of the tasks. According to Deci, work must meet two criteria in order to motivate an employee: it has to foster autonomy and the employee must be competent. This means that an employee takes on the most important decisions and responsibilities associated with his task, relative to his ability and competency. If a worker is given leeway to act, and has the proper skills and abilities, the employee will be intrinsically motivated to continue his work.

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In the motivation model of Hackman and Oldham the leading principle is that employees are more motivated in their work if they are personally responsible for it, if they consider their work to be valuable, and if they have foresight into the end results. In practice, this model is effective in steering processes of task enrichment. Greater autonomy and better feedback regarding outcome, combined with emphasis on the importance of the job, stimulates the motivation of employees.

This overview of Nieuwenhuis (2010, pp.131–141) clarifies that motivation of people can be stimulated in many different ways, based on different approaches. Although the described theories are all related to work situations, with people in the roles of employee and employer, they are also useful in the field of social work and related professions. Social workers often deal with clients facing disappointment, dissatisfaction, and despair. In one way or another, these clients must be supported and empowered to find and generate motivation, to set new goals in life, and to change their patterns of thinking and behaviour in order to approach problems in a more effective manner.

2.2.3 16 basic needs

In many psychological theories on motivation, a distinction is made between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation means that the motivation to do something comes from inside a person. Extrinsic motivation means that the motivation, or pressure to do something, comes from outside the person (e.g. from an individual's partner, parents, teacher, employer, or a police officer).

This long-established distinction in psychology is criticized by Steven Reiss as cited in an article by De Bruin (2005) 'A typical intrinsic motivation as curiosity for example, can also be evoked by the social environment,' according to Reiss, 'because people in boring circumstances are going to explore other realities by themselves.' He also criticizes the idea that intrinsically motivated behaviour is seen as an outcome, while extrinsically motivated behaviour is seen as a means to achieve something else, such as money or status. According to Reiss, a means can never compete with a goal: means facilitate goals, while someone can also be intrinsically motivated to earn money.

Reiss conducted studies involving more than 10,000 open and anonymous interviews with people in the USA, Canada, and Japan, across cultural borders. He found that a limited number of basic desires guide nearly all meaningful behaviour.

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Reiss published his findings in *Who am I? 16 Basic Desires That Motivate Our Actions and Define Our Personalities* (Reiss 2000). The 16 basic desires are:

- *Power*, desire to have influence
- *Curiosity*, need for knowledge
- *Independence*, desire for autonomy
- *Status*, need for social recognition and attention
- *Social contact*, need for company and playing
- *Vengeance*, need to break even, but also to fight and to win
- *Honour*, need to obey traditional moral standards and values
- *Idealism*, need to improve society and being altruistic and righteous
- *Physical exercise*, need to train the muscles
- *Romance*, need for sex and courtship
- *Family*, desire to raise children
- *Order*, need to organize and perform rituals
- *Eating*, need for food
- *Acceptance*, need for acknowledgement
- *Tranquility*, need to avoid unrest and fear
- *Saving*, need to collect and to economize.

According to Reiss these desires drive our everyday actions and make us who we are. At least 14 of the 16 basic desires seem to have a genetic basis (they are similar to those seen in animals). Only the desires for idealism and acceptance do not.

On an individual level, one can see varying combinations of needs and desires. Religious people scored high on 'honour' and 'family', and low on 'vengeance' and 'independence'. Sports students scored high on 'physical exercise', 'social contact', 'family', 'vengeance', and 'power', and low on 'curiosity'. Students in secondary education with low grades scored low on 'curiosity', 'honour', and 'idealism', and high on 'vengeance' and 'social contact' (de Bruin 2005).

Today the Reiss Profile is used in various fields and situations. According to Step4ward, Institute for the Reiss Profile (2011),

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'competence-based human resources consulting with the aid of the Reiss Profile' is offered in the following domains:

- personnel selection
- personnel development
- personality development
- organizational development
- team development
- outplacement
- behaviour training
- coaching.

Because these fields are related to or overlap with social work, the use of the Reiss Profile in social work can be effective as a diagnostic instrument, a tool for self-knowledge, and as an indicator for behavioural change.

2.3 The 'whole' human being

The existence of different levels of needs reveals that human beings are versatile. More precisely, man is a physical, mental, rational, social, and spiritual being. In health care and social work, we speak about man in this context as a *psychosociosomatic being*. Connecting the words *psycho*, *socio*, and *somatic* demonstrates that individual problems, deficiencies in society, and illnesses have multiple causes as well as multiple effects on individual beings, and most of the time they need multiple solutions. This is called a 'holistic' approach.

2.3.1 Holism

'Holism' and 'holistic' originate from the Greek word *holon*, meaning whole, entirety, or completeness. Holism is a way of thinking in which the whole is seen as a separate entity, consisting of constituent parts (or components) but not as the sum of them. The constituent parts affect each other and, by doing so, create a unique, separate entity.

The Swedish psychologist David Magnusson (2000) describes how the holistic approach is basically rooted in the history of scientific psychology. In the early part of the twentieth century, 'a holistic position was strongly advocated, from different perspectives, by some of the most distinguished psychologists, among them Gordon Allport, Alfred Binet,

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Wilhelm Stern, Egon Brunswik, and Kurt Lewin' (Magnusson 2000, p.33).

In the 1950s and 1960s the holistic view was out of fashion in scientific psychology, as it was in other social sciences. The dominating behaviourism, the preference for experiments, the focus on natural sciences, and the strong emphasis on theoretical models at the micro level of individual functioning 'lacked a foundation in careful, systematic analyses of the character of the phenomena under investigation, and were not formulated within a common, integrated theoretical framework for individual functioning and development' (p.34). The end result was, according to Magnusson, 'compartmentalization and fragmentation of psychological theorizing and empirical research' (p.34).

The main cause of this fragmentation in psychology is, in Magnusson's view, 'the absence of a holistic integrated model for individual functioning and development, which could serve as the common theoretical framework for theorizing and empirical research on psychological phenomena.' But there was a problem, namely:

> The traditional holistic view was empty; it lacked specific content about the functioning and interplay of basic psychological and biological elements operating in the processes of the integrated organism. What went on between the stimulus and the response was regarded as unknown and inaccessible to scientific inquiry. (Magnusson 2000, p.34)

In recent decades, an increasing number of voices have been raised in support of this neglected perspective. In 1979, Robert Cairns formulated a view of developmental processes that is still utilized currently. He summarized his view as follows: 'Behavior, whether social or nonsocial, is appropriately viewed in terms of an organized system, and its explanation requires a "holistic analysis"' (cited in Magnusson 2000, p.34).

The holistic approach in scientific psychology developed slowly in the 1980s by gaining some influence on theory and empirical research dealing with central concepts such as perception, cognition, and memory. Since the 1990s, the holistic approach in social sciences has developed more rapidly. In psychology, pioneering developments in applied fields have generated a solid theoretical foundation for planning, implementation, and interpretation of empirical research on specific problems.

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According to Magnusson, 'four main sources have contributed to this by enriching the empty holistic view with substantive content and providing methodological tools and research strategies which are compatible with the nature of the phenomena with which we are concerned' (p.35). These four main sources are:

- research on mental (or cognitive) processes
- research on biological aspects of individual development and functioning
- modern models for dynamic complex processes
- longitudinal research.

Research on mental processes

For a long time mental processes were neglected in psychology. But since the 1960s 'research on information processing, memory, and decision making has made dramatic progress and contributed essential knowledge necessary for the understanding and explanation of individual development and functioning' (Magnusson 2000, p.35). Magnusson strongly believes that if these concepts are extended to include emotions and values, they will closely resemble a holistic theoretical framework for future research.

Research on biological aspects of individual development and functioning

Medicine and biology have provided new insights into the role of internal biological structures and processes in the total functioning and development of individuals.

Research has shown 'how multiple brain regions, operating in synchronic interaction, are involved in complex perceptual-cognitive processes' (Magnusson 2000, p.36) This has helped to 'bridge the gap between biological and psychological models' (p.36), as that is also the case with the 'growing understanding of the role of biochemicals in the individuals way of dealing with situational-environmental conditions' (p.37).

Another valuable contribution of biology is the research on the role and influence of genes in individual development processes. 'The discovery of DNA and the genetic code in the 1960s (…) opened up new windows for mapping the individual genome structure and for research

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on the mechanisms by which genetic factors operate in individuals.' (p.38).

Modern models for dynamic complex processes

The third source for the application of a holistic perspective in psychology is formed by the universal models developed in natural sciences for the study of dynamic complex processes: Chaos Theory, General Systems Theory, and Catastrophe Theory. 'These theoretical models, particularly Chaos Theory, have had an almost revolutionary impact on both theory building and empirical research in scientific disciplines that focus on multidetermined stochastic processes such as meteorology, biology, chemistry, and ecology', according to Magnusson (p. 38) He is of the opinion that 'the way in which mental, biological, behavioral, and social factors operate together in individual development and individual functioning can be likened to a series of complex dynamic and adaptive processes' (p.38).

In psychological research, the general systems approach is adopted, and to a lesser degree the chaos and catastrophe theories. For Magnusson, these modern models all emphasize the holistic, integrated nature of dynamic, complex processes. They also:

> provide a theoretical framework for understanding the dynamic processes of interaction of operating factors within the individual, and the continuous bidirectional interaction between the individual and his or her environment in the person-environment system, within a single integrated perspective. Interaction among operating factors is a fundamental characteristic of the processes at all levels of the dynamic, integrated person-environment system. (Magnusson 2000, p.39)

Longitudinal research

The fourth and main source of enrichment for the holistic perspective lies in the revival of longitudinal research. 'Inadequacies of the piecemeal or variable oriented approach to the study of developmental issues become obvious in well-planned longitudinal studies that track individuals over time and contexts' (pp.40–41). Magnusson is of the opinion that this longitudinal design is necessary for understanding developmental processes.

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For psychologists such as Magnusson, the ultimate goal is to understand and explain thoughts, feelings, actions, and reactions of individuals. One of his conclusions is that

> any general model which seeks to contribute to this goal must incorporate mental, biological, behavioural, and social factors into a single integrated model. These factors function simultaneously and need to be placed in a coherent theoretical framework, in which the total individual is the organizing principle. That is, any general framework for psychological research must be holistic. (Magnusson 2000, p.42)

Thus far, Magnusson is satisfied with the outcome: 'The modern holistic-interactionist view offers a stable platform for further scientific progress in psychology, enabling us to fall into step with recent developments in other disciplines in the life sciences' (p.42).

Magnusson is an advocate of Developmental Science. This new science is multidisciplinary because 'it is located at the interface of developmental psychology, developmental biology, molecular biology, physiology, neuropsychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, and neighboring disciplines' (p.42).

To stimulate and institutionalize this new science, a Center for Developmental Science was erected in 1994 at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Robert Cairns was the founding director of the Center, and served in this position until his death in 1999. Today, the Center for Developmental Science (CDS) (2012) has six strategic research objectives:

1. To serve as an inter-institutional and interdisciplinary institute of advanced study in human development.
2. To enhance teaching by providing an advanced interdisciplinary studies programme in developmental science for undergraduates, doctoral students, postdoctoral fellows, visiting scholars, and affiliated faculty members.
3. To foster and support student and faculty scholarship and research collaboration across disciplines, departments, schools, and universities in the study of developmental processes. A special emphasis is placed on involving early-career scientists in collaborations that will help them in developing their own research programmes.

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4. To foster cross-institutional cooperation in developmental studies at component campuses of the University of North Carolina, private universities in North Carolina, and other US and international institutions.
5. To advance the frontiers of behavioural, biological, and social science by supporting interdisciplinary research and training on the bio-behavioural development of individuals over their lifespan and across generations.
6. To serve society by establishing linkages between the University of North Carolina, the state, the nation, and the world through research related to the promotion of health and well-being in individuals, families, schools, and communities.

Today the CDS is still flourishing. The Center is embedded in a faculty consisting of scientists of six universities and has a select group of researchers. At this moment CDS has three branches: the Carolina Consortium on Human Development, the Behavioral Science Research Division, and the Social Development Research Division.

2.3.2 Holistic interactionism

Magnusson presents a theoretical framework that he calls holistic interactionism. He describes the reason for developing it as follows:

> A modern holistic view emphasizes an approach to the individual and the person-environment system as organized wholes functioning as integrated totalities. At each level, the totality derives its characteristic features and properties from the interaction among the elements involved, not from the effect of each isolated part on the totality. Each aspect of the structures and processes that are operating (perceptions, plans, values, goals, motives, biological factors, conduct, etc.), as well as each aspect of the environment, takes on meaning from the role it plays in the total functioning of the individual. (Magnusson 2000, pp.42–43)

The role of the acting individual, essential for social work, is tied in with Magnusson's concept of 'self-organization'. 'Self-organization is a characteristic of open systems and refers to a process by which new structures and patterns emerge. From the beginning of fetal development, self-organization is a guiding principle in developmental processes' (p.43). Magnusson quotes Nobel laureate Jacob: 'Finality in the living

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world thus originates from the idea of organism, because the parts have to produce each other, because they have to associate to form the whole, because, as Kant said, "living beings must be self-organized"'(p.44).

Magnusson's holistic interactionism fits with the body of knowledge of social work because of the wide, integrated approach of human behaviour, the interaction between the individual and his or her surroundings, the various roles played by actors, and the unique circumstances of each situation. Magnusson's approach provides the social worker with a wide and varying repertoire of interventions to support the change of behaviour of clients and surrounding actors in a desired direction.

What does not complement social work is the absence of the responsible individual, the responsible citizen with rights and duties, who, if necessary, can be called to accountability and carry the consequences for his or her own actions. In this respect, holistic interactionism and the concept of self-organization need further elaboration and explanation. And, of course, operationalization is necessary to generate applicable instructions that can be used in varying practices and situations.

Due to their orientation regarding the interaction between the individual and his surroundings (see Chapter 1), social workers are used to looking through holistic glasses at the everyday reality of their clients and themselves. This dates back to the beginning of the 20th century:

> Continuing the philosophy and efforts of social work legend, Mary Richmond, this holistic approach brings together a time tested perspective to social work blending individual, ecological, and systems theories and acknowledging the physical, mental, emotional, social, economic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of human life. (Blachman 2004, p.217)

Its holistic approach is a distinctive characteristic of social work: 'Central to family health theory and practice is consideration of unique aspects of contemporary family life, such as neighborhood and culture, often overlooked by other practitioners of other clinical methods' (Blachman 2004, p.218).

John Murphy (1994) also concludes that a holistic approach is common among social workers. The individual is seen as more than an isolated psychological being, because he or she is influenced by social class, experiences, culture, and language through interaction with others. In the words of Murphy: 'The individual should be viewed as more than a psychological entity. Variables such as class, personal and collective

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experiences, language use, and styles of parental interaction, for instance, are to be viewed as shaping behavior' (p.56). He continues by saying: 'No person should be viewed as an island… Instead, behavior should be viewed as multidimensional and facts should be supplemented by evidence. As a result, data are reviewed in the proper perspective and assessed within the social context' (p.56).

Murphy is of the belief that holism within social work practice needs more theoretical foundation and legitimization, and connects it with elements of postmodernism. In my opinion, this is not a practical perspective. It makes more sense to connect to holistic approaches in social science and research, such as Magnusson's holistic interactionism described and discussed previously.

Based on the latest results of scientific research, the holistic approach has made a comeback in social sciences, in the form of new concepts and theories. If the revival of holism is as durable as it appears to be, it will generate a continuous stream of insights, concepts, and models that can be useful for social workers and related professionals, and that can extend and enrich the body of knowledge of social, medical, therapeutic, and educational professions. However, as in the case of social work, it is necessary to 'translate' theoretical insights, concepts, and models into practice-oriented standards, knowledge, and methods, meeting the unique needs of the specific professional fields.

Translation, adaptation, and operationalization are pre-eminently a task for the developers, researchers, and teachers of the many applied sciences, professional theories, and methodological courses developed, taught, and trained since the 1960s. This is also true for the social, medical, therapeutic, and educational professions. Most of the generated knowledge and skill is aimed at changing practical behaviour of individuals, groups, and organizations, simultaneously improving work and life conditions. I refer to Theory of Social Work, Theory of Education, Social Case Work, Group Dynamics, Pedagogic Help, Psychotherapy, Creative Therapy, Public Administration, Marketing, Community Development, Human Resource Management, Communication Theory, and various types of practice methods, orientations, courses, and training.

2.4 Life conditions: Ecological Systems Theory

Through continuous efforts to satisfy needs, develop skills, and increase knowledge, the individual depends on the environment which he is a part of. The ongoing interaction between person and environment is a

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multiple, mutual influencing process, in which many actors and factors (e.g. positions, roles, rules, possessions, and power balance) are involved.

To fully comprehend the complex interaction between a person and his or her environment, many social workers and related professionals rely on the concepts and insights of the Ecological Systems Theory of psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner.

With his developmental concept of interaction and mutuality between individual person and environment, Bronfenbrenner (1979) broke through the biased emphasis of traditional developmental psychology on the individual being, and traditional sociology on the environment. Bronfenbrenner defined 'development' as the developing view of an individual person from his ecological environment, of his relation with it, and of his ability to discover, continue, or change it.

Based on this transactional approach of educational and developmental psychology and sociology, Bronfenbrenner constructed the Ecological Systems Theory. It is an open system approach that is similar to that of the holistic interactionism of Magnusson (see Section 2.3.2).

In the Ecological Systems Theory the individual is surrounded by five systems (Bronfenbrenner 1994), namely:

1. *The microsystem*

   Examples: family, siblings, schoolmates, peer group, neighbours.

   Definition: 'A pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interactions with, and activity in, the immediate environment' (p.1645).

2. *The mesosystem*

   Examples: neighbourhood, town, school, sports club, office, workplace.

   Definition: 'Comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (e.g. the relations between home and school, school and workplace, etc.)' (p.1646).

3. *The exosystem*

   Examples: powerful institutions and structures with established standards and regulations.

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Definition: 'Comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives' (p.1646).

4. *The macrosystem*

   Example: the larger social-cultural context, such as the national state.

   Definition: 'Consists of the overarching pattern of micro, meso, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture or subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems. The macrosystem may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture' (p.1646).

5. *The chronosystem*

   Examples: changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence, degree of busyness, and the ability to function in everyday life.

   Definition: 'Encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives' (p.1646).

Due to the popularity of Bronfenbrenner's theory, many comprehensive diagrams were made to explain and teach his ecological model to students and workers. Figure 2.3 shows the one I use.

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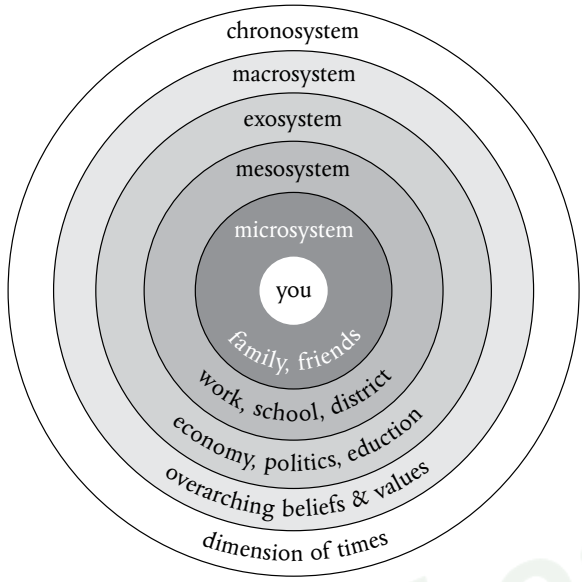

Figure 2.3 The Ecological Systems Theory (based on Bronfenbrenner 1994)

Within each of the systems, persons and groups are functioning in roles that are part of the informal or formal (e.g. institutional) settings of that system. Each system and setting produces and maintains standards and rules that influence life conditions and determine the possibilities and limitations for individuals to meet their needs and fulfil their desires.

In the Ecological Systems Theory, behavioural problems are not only of individual character, nor are they only caused by environmental influences. Behavioural problems are seen as a result of lacking balance in the individual eco system (e.g. as an interaction problem, a mismatch, between the individual and his environment).

Unbalance can be caused by a lack of commitment between individual expectations and those of the environment. However, it can also be the result of lack of coordination between different actors in the environment of the person in question.

To solve behavioural problems, changes are necessary. The actors involved are all in roles that are connected with a setting. Changes have the character of 'ecological transitions'. Such a transition takes place if the position of one or more persons changes due to a change in role, a change of setting, or both.

The question is: who and what has to change in order to solve the problem? The person with the problem? The persons who created the

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problem? The situation in the psychological and physical environment? Or the interaction between the various actors involved?

The Ecological Systems Theory still challenges and inspires professionals in many fields. It encourages breaking down barriers between sciences and professions, and building bridges between different disciplines. It is also useful as 'medicine' against fragmentation, isolation, and individualization. It can be considered a holistic approach, as in Magnusson's holistic interactionism (see Section 2.3.2).

The Ecological Systems Approach offers social workers the opportunity and means for a vast, open, and comprehensive approach to behavioural problems, and stimulates an interdisciplinary style of working. This opens a perspective toward more durable results in terms of better functioning clients in an improved environment.

2.5 Communicative action: Life World and System World

Communication is basic in human life. Nothing works without it. Appropriate, effective communication is therefore a challenge for everyone in society. Communication is an important factor in both the occurrence of problems and in solving them.

Effective communication is both a skill and an art. On a micro level it is part of the individual learning process that we call 'socialization'. On a meso level it helps people to understand each other, to cooperate, and to participate. On a macro level, communication sustains cultures, unites individuals, and gives them an identity, as well as keeping people informed of what is occurring around the world.

Hindering communication in any way creates misunderstanding, leads to questionable decisions, endangers relationships between people, causes conflicts, and generates problems. If a lack of communication or manipulated forms of communication draw people away from truth and reality, order can turn into chaos, and social responsibility can change into individual survival of the fittest.

Social workers are confronted, and have to cope with, inequalities between people. Most of the time, social work clients are vulnerable individuals and groups. Power, authority, and means are often the discriminating factors between people in a weak versus a strong position in society.

When it comes to something as challenging as communication, it is clear that communication between people in unequal positions is much

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more difficult than communication between equals. Social workers, dedicated to improving the position and situation of vulnerable people and groups in society, have a difficult job establishing effective forms of communication between powerful and vulnerable people. Quite often as a starting point, social workers have to act as mediators to bring people to, or keep people on, speaking terms.

On a theoretical level, communication can be better understood through communicative action. Jürgen Habermas (1981) gave birth to the Critical Theory, in which he defines communicative action as 'that form of social interaction in which the plans of action of different actors are co-coordinated through an exchange of communicative acts, that is, through a use of language orientated towards reaching understanding' (p.44). This can only be achieved if communication between different actors involved in a specific matter is based on truth, rightness, and sincerity, and on the inter-subjective recognition of these values by all parties involved. Habermas calls these *universal validity claims*.

In everyday reality, it is a challenge to create such a situation, especially between actors in different positions with different interests. Social workers are trained to understand and recognize this very well.

In his analysis of communicative action, Jürgen Habermas identifies two core spheres: the 'Life World' and the 'System World'. Although they are associated in practice, they can and should be analysed separately.

The Life World is the often overlooked universe of everyday existence, the saturation of communicative action by tradition and the way people are accustomed to doing things in their everyday lives.

The System World refers to areas of life that are organized and controlled by the state and the institutions in society, especially the political and economic subsystems that govern important aspects of our lives. 'Whereas the Life World is concerned with cultural integration and socialization, the System World focuses on material reproduction. Consequently, it is dominated by power, money and strategic action' (Houston 2009, p.16).

Problems occur when representatives of the Life World (citizens, interest groups) and System World (authorities, managers, officials) meet and interact, and one sphere dominates the other. These encounters happen worldwide on a daily basis, numerous times, and on micro, meso and macro levels.

In communicative action, participants coordinate their actions on the basis of a shared understanding that the goals they set are inherently reasonable or meritworthy. In contrast, strategic action is a form of

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action aimed to achieve particular ends, based on the use of influence, force, sanctions, or money. While communicative action is actually an inherently harmonious form of social coordination, strategic action is a form of fighting and competing for the best interest of a person, group, institute, or company. Without mediation, many interactions between Life and System Worlds are battle-grounds for strategic action from one or more sides, without the opportunity for communicative action from any actors involved.

Life World and System World have become more differentiated from each other, leading to a critical stage in society's development as we experience it today.

> Having uncoupled from the life world, the all-powerful system re-enters it, this time to colonize its functions. This means that instrumentality, rationality, money, bureaucracy and power – the trappings of the system – usurp communicative action as the chief means for resolving issues and problems in the life world. As a consequence, social life becomes increasingly monetarized, commodified and bureaucratized. In short, entropy sets in. An example of colonization is the bureaucratization of schools, where league tables and other performance criteria undermine the practice of education as a communicational discipline. (Houston 2009, p.17)

Habermas looks critically at the welfare state.

> By offering mainly bureaucratized interventions to those who are in need, it erodes earlier traditions of care, such as are found in neighborhoods and social networks, and also undermines the informal, communicational mechanisms that coordinate them. More than this, the system uses social welfare as a protective mechanism to ward off discontent in the life world. This occurs mainly when there are legitimation crises in the economy and the disparities between rich and poor become most acute. To offset the crisis, and mollify discontent, the welfare state provides social assistance and other benefits. (Houston 2009, p.17)

Modern history shows that parliamentary democracy, democratic action, and citizen participation are the best and most effective solutions to these kinds of developments. As long as authorities, institutes, and companies operate within the framework of a constitutional, democratic state, with a free press and respecting civil and human rights, they can be criticized, influenced, corrected, and directed by government and parliament.

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In Chapter 5 I discuss the contribution of social work to democratic functioning of society on all levels and in all fields, by facilitating and supporting the participation of individual and organized citizens.

Houston (2009) concludes that there is a growing interest in Habermas' ideas in Western social work: 'For some commentators, his work provides a viable alternative to postmodernism, which, because of its perceived, inherent relativism, fails to offer the required justification for ethical practice'(p.19). Many social workers and social work researchers all over the world use concepts and elements of communicative action in their theoretical and methodical work in various fields; from decision making in fostering and adoption via family therapy, to working with mentally disabled, to care management in social work. On the meso and macro levels, Habermas' theory is very useful in practices such as user involvement, networking, action learning, and peer supervision.

2.6 Practice: the basics of social work

Motivation Theories (Section 2.2), Holistic Approach (Section 2.3), Ecological Systems Theory (Section 2.4), and Theory of Communicative Action (Section 2.5) are vital to the body of knowledge of social work as described in the international definition (Section 1.1). With the help of these fundamental theories it is possible to describe and explain the complex interaction between the individual being and his social environment in a clear, systematic way. This helps in understanding the origins of many problems, and offers starting points of action for social workers and other helping professionals in education, health care, and welfare.

I will outline this the way I do for students. I will begin 'from scratch' and construct a step-by-step approach that is fundamental for social work and other helping professions.

2.6.1 Nature and nurture

Each individual person is the product of two other human beings, a man and woman, whether conceived naturally or otherwise. A child bears the genetic mark of his biological parents.

If events after a child's birth go 'according to plan', the child's parent or parents (whether biological or not) will also take care of and nurture the child in and from the social group which they, therefore also their child, are a part of. However, various circumstances can cause things to occur very differently. In many situations, children are taken care of and

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raised by other family members, foster parents, or guardians, in and from the respective social group and culture to which the caregivers belong.

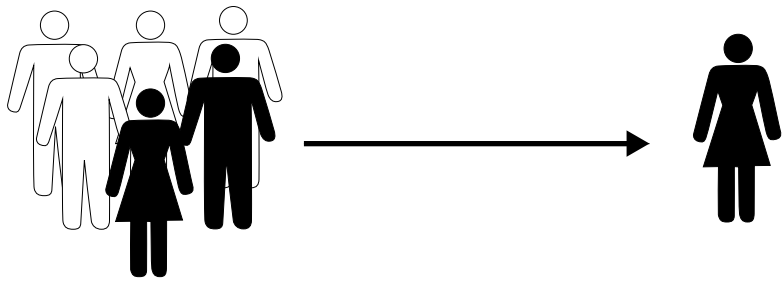

Figure 2.4 The individual person as member of a group

'Nature' (genes) and 'nurture' (socialization and education) have a strong influence on the first five or six years of a child's life. These early years greatly impact children and generate a 'blueprint' which affects how the child will grow up and find his way in life as an adult.

A child is greatly affected by his surroundings, but the opposite is also true; a child also influences other people in his environment. The very existence of the child has a great impact on the life conditions and behaviour of his or her parents or caregivers, and the people with whom they associate. These people must play new roles (such as father, mother, sister, grandparent, uncle, foster parent), fulfil the tasks related to those roles, and conduct themselves according to culturally determined rules of behaviour, law, and regulations for children and their caregivers. People are bound by the ties of caregiving for a period of at least 18 years, and have to adapt and alter their lifestyle and social activities accordingly.

The child itself, as part of a family, influences the others by his or her character, behaviour, and physical and mental condition. Family members are strongly connected, and are dependant on each other. Ideally, they develop long-lasting, reciprocal relationships based on mutual expectations, shared cultural standards and values, and specific behavioural patterns.

2.6.2 Social environment: micro, meso, and macro

Until school age, the child is raised in primary groups such as: family, day care centre, neighbours, and friends. These are groups on the *micro level* (from the Greek *mikros* = small), also named 'microsystem' in

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(Ecological) Systems Theory. When the child grows up, he or she will also involve classmates in his or her direct environment.

School, neighbourhood, sports club, local government, supermarket, company, office, factory, local transport, and church are examples of institutes on the *meso level* (from the Greek *mesos* = middle) with which people deal on a regular, sometimes daily, basis. These establishments are important for meeting vital needs, (further) education, and socialization of children, adults, and the elderly.

Last, but not least, is the *macro level*, the larger social-cultural context, also in terms of the Ecological Systems Theory. An example on this level is the country a person lives in, is a citizen of, and of which that person speaks the language. Also on this level is the continent on which a person lives, the international authorities and institutes which a person's country is connected with, as well as the multinational organizations, companies, and services that influence the life circumstances of one's country, and the local area where a person lives.

To avoid confusion, I use the term 'level' to differentiate from the Ecological Systems Theory 'system'. For simplicity, I use three levels (micro, meso, and macro), while Bronfenbrenner uses five 'systems'. In the meso leveI I include both the 'mesosystem' (town, institutes, companies) as well as the underlying 'exosystem' (power and roles of the actors on meso level). I make no use of a separate 'chronosystem', but include the historical, developmental perspective in my analysis.

The social environment of an individual being can be visualized in Figure 2.5. The individual is in the centre. From his or her perspective, the various social groups, organizations, and institutes which the person is a part of or dependent on are placed on the level where the individual is functioning. The three levels, micro, meso and macro, are layers around the individual person. One can also imagine a set of Russian dolls, because the three levels are mutually connected and intertwined, as well as strengthening each other. The division between the levels is not intended as a total separation, but rather to demonstrate a distinction between the levels.

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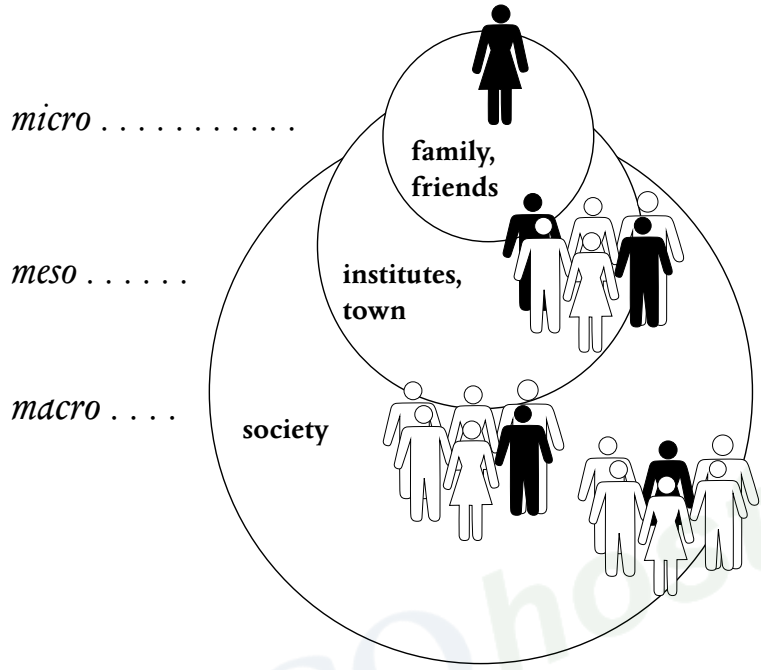

Figure 2.5 The individual in society

Figure 2.6 Russian dolls

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The neighbourhood or village where one lives (micro) is part of a municipality (meso) that is a part of the country, the national state (macro). The country is a member of multinational institutes (e.g. the European Union, NATO, and the United Nations) which are also part of the macro level.

An institute or event on the macro level seems distant, but under certain circumstances hits very close to home with its impact and consequences on the life conditions of social groups and individual persons. For example, think of a change in financial support for students, the social benefit of the unemployed, the pensions of the elderly, or the salaries of civil servants. The income of people is subject to national policy at the macro level, but effects are felt directly in the wallets of persons depending on that income.

In modern times, distance is relative. An incident with a nuclear plant in Russia can have negative effects on the natural environment in Western Europe. A terrorist attack in New York can have consequences for nations and people all over the world. Similarly, Chinese investments in poor countries can have positive effects on local employment and economic perspectives of ordinary citizens in those countries.

The hierarchical order of public institutions, and of (inter) national companies, crosses the boundaries of the different levels. A neighbourhood primary school is bound by policy and regulations of the national Ministry of Education, and the local supermarket is subject to regional, national, and international policy of the company that owns it.

The opposite is also true. A special event in a city, town, or village, or an extraordinary effort of a local person or regional institution, can attract national or international attention on the internet, television, radio, or newspaper, and can even have effects elsewhere in the world.

As in Bronfenbrenner's 'systems', on each of the three levels (micro, meso, and macro) various actors (an actor is an acting person, group, institute, company, or authority) play roles and perform tasks that are part of (institutional) settings. The cashier of the local supermarket checks the purchase of customers and collects the money. The policeman gives a fine for driving in the dark without proper lights. The teacher assigns grades. The British Prime Minister informs on cuts in the budget. The President of the USA proclaims the withdrawal of armed forces from Afghanistan, so that people's brothers, sisters or cousins will be home for Christmas. These examples demonstrate that actors and events on the macro, meso, and micro level are mutually connected, interact

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with each other continuously, and communicate both from the top down and the bottom up.

On each of the three levels, regulations and standards apply that (can) have a direct influence on the possibilities of the individual to satisfy his needs and improve his life conditions. In other words: if a person wants something, the individual will be directly or indirectly confronted with the existing possibilities and limitations of established structures and organizations, based on actual social relationships. To a certain extent, the individual is pressured to adapt to these in order to achieve or to keep what he wants.

2.6.3 Groups, structures, roles, and power

From the moment a child is born, he or she is a part of the social group of his or her parents or of the people who raise him. That social group is part of the society as a whole, existing on all three levels. Sociology demonstrates how people, based on the status of their education, profession, and wealth, place each other into groups ranging from high to low social classification.

Figure 2.7 shows how social stratification, the categorization of people in classes or strata, works.

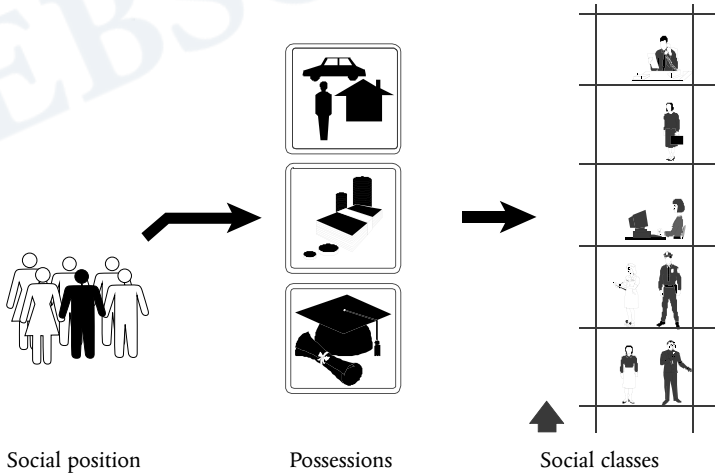

Figure 2.7 How social stratification works

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Someone's social position is determined by his or her education and profession. How high the education, and how high the status and the earnings of the profession, determine how high the status and social position in society.

From childhood we learn to go along with others in and from certain roles. In daily life we play many roles, more than we realize, and often more than we can handle at the same time. For example: in the company of your parents you have the role of child, even if you are an adult, and together you form a family. You are also grandchild of grandmothers and grandfathers, of which you can have more than four in modern times. You are niece or nephew of the sisters and brothers of each of your parents, and cousins of their children. At school you are pupil, with classmates and teachers. If you go on studying, you will have the role of student and be attended by lecturers, tutors, and professors. You are friend of someone. You have the role of neighbour in the street where you live. At your work you are employee and you have colleagues, with chiefs and director in charge. In bus, tram, train, boat, or plane you are passenger. For the administration and the police you are citizen, holder of a residence permit, foreign tourist, or illegal person. If you commit a crime, you become suspect, and can be accused. If a judge agrees, you end up in a prison and become prisoner, guarded by warders. In health care you are patient. In social work and for a lawyer you are client. In the military you are soldier, sergeant, or officer. In (web)shops and the supermarket you are customer, as you are for the energy, gas, and water supplier. You are tenant if you rent a room or a house, and landlord or owner if a house or apartment is yours. You are member of many organizations: church, sports club, library, trade union, political party, self-help group, tenants' committee, welfare organization, or an association of dog owners. You are subscriber of a newspaper or magazine, listener or viewer for the broadcast corporation. You are voter and/or candidate during election time. You become driver, and participate in traffic, from the moment you step on or in a vehicle. At a congress or conference you are participant and maybe also speaker. In the stadium you are spectator. If you go abroad you step into the role of traveller, tourist, 'backpacker', or 'rich Westerner'. And if you earn a living from them, you work as pilot, hostess, driver, guide, tour leader, or hotel manager. And for this book I am author and you are (if you are still with me) reader.

Each role is part of a structure. Every structure generates different roles, and most of the time more persons are in the same role. Roles are

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played according to certain rules and regulations of behaviour. These rules and regulations are concrete expressions of the function and value of the role and the underlying structure according to the organization and the surrounding society (i.e. a big part of the population). If you are not (sufficiently) aware of it, you will be reminded by comments, complaints, sanctions, and punishment.

Examples: every citizen is expected to know the law. Drivers are expected to stop for a red traffic light. An owner of a restaurant is expected to prepare and serve food according to basic standards of hygiene. In many countries he is also obliged to forbid his customers to smoke. A surgeon is expected to have a proper education for what he is intending to do with his patient in the operating theatre. And from a politician in a democratic country we expect proper behaviour according to the law, and dedication to the public cause.

2.6.4 Abilities, attitude, and skills

On each of the three levels, micro, meso, and macro, people play roles and perform tasks in relation to others, both in their private lives and their public lives, within an organized institutional context. To fulfil roles and perform tasks in a way that satisfies others and oneself, certain mental and physical abilities are needed, as well as a vision of man's place in society, a belief system, and an appropriate attitude. Finally, a number of social and technical skills are necessary to successfully fill a role expectation.

The objective is to survive: to eat, have shelter, develop talents, and to build and maintain a way of life that is satisfying and fulfilling. In Maslow's terms, the goal is to meet the various needs outlined in the hierarchy of needs (see Section 2.2.1).

Figure 2.8 is a summary of an individual's three basic personal qualities, *abilities*, *attitude*, and *skills*, and how these affect one's capacity to fulfil certain roles. The five symbols on the left side of the outer circle represent basic needs and vital resources of every individual: *work (income)*, *housing*, *education and development*, *environment*, and a *democratic state*.

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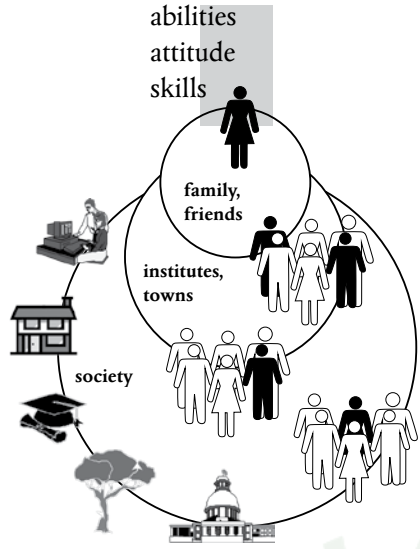

Figure 2.8 Individual and social conditions of a person

An individual must live with what he has, wherever he is, and from the very moment he arrives there. Every man must try to meet his own needs, regardless of the circumstances in which he finds himself. This requires great effort, whereby an individual must apply all that he has learned through his education and socialization.

What people have to offer differs from person to person. An individual who, by birth or by disease or accident, does not possess his full mental and/or physical abilities is in a weaker position than someone born with full capacity and capability who may simply be deemed more 'fortunate' in his life circumstances. This person's potential and chances of succeeding are likely to be much higher than those of the individual lacking specific abilities.

In a society where people compete for the best, where everything can be bought for a price, and where appearance and presentation are considered extremely important, a person with mental or physical challenges may be an 'underdog' by definition. Such a person is likely to require extra support and assistance to compensate for lack of certain capabilities.

Social circumstances differ between countries. A large portion of the world's population still struggles just to survive from one day to the next. This is not by choice, but is a result of the situation of their country, whether or not by its own doing.

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2.6.5 Unsatisfied needs

Poor people, living in marginal social conditions who are not able to change their circumstances will usually reconcile themselves to their situation. Therefore, they will never reach a higher level of satisfaction in the hierarchy of needs as described by Maslow.

In the past, this would have been less troubling than today. Advanced, accessible telecommunications and mass transport have made the world 'smaller' than ever before in human history. Only in a few scattered instances do people today grow up and lead their lives in an isolated community. The implication is that people all over the world frequently, often on a daily basis, are confronted with images and sounds of people, life circumstances, religions, and habits from all over the world. Because of the huge commercial influence, television programmes advertise luxury goods and services, and promote a lifestyle whereby happiness is based on acquiring these things. This can be very disheartening for people who are not able to attain a Western life standard. The 'ignorance is bliss' of earlier times is no longer a reality in today's society.

If people cannot fulfil their needs in their environment, it will lead to disappointment, frustration, and dissatisfaction, depending on the extent to which their needs are not met. If people do not believe that change is possible, and lose hope for the future, the feelings of discontentment will only worsen.

In such situations people have a choice out of one of four reactions: fighting, fleeing, avoiding, or ignoring. If these unfortunate circumstances are sustained purposely by individuals, social groups, institutes, or companies who have a vested interest in doing so, the marginalized people have identifiable opponents. The exploited people then estimate the position and power of their opponents, then decide if it is possible to organize a successful collective resistance. This is what happened with the younger generations in many of the Arab countries, leading to the revolutions of 2011. If such a way out is unlikely, fleeing becomes the obvious choice, sometimes after a period of avoiding and/or ignoring.

These kinds of situations occur on all levels. On the world scale, people may flee their country; in families, teenagers revolt against parents; at work, a dissatisfied employee applies for another job, amongst many other possible scenarios. Besides the rather obvious responses such as fighting, fleeing, avoiding, or ignoring, there are also 'silent' reactions on a personal level in various forms, such as addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling, and sex), stress, burnout, psychosomatic complaints like backache and headaches, stomach disorders, and food-related problems.

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Figure 2.9 outlines these mismatches between individual needs and social conditions.

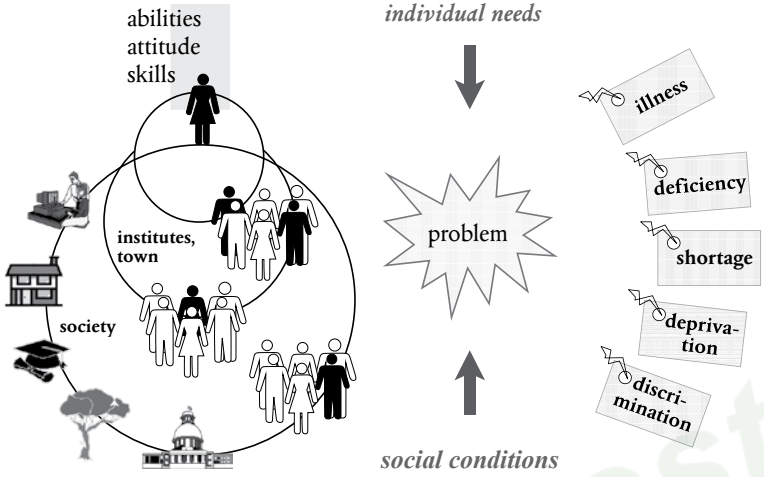

Figure 2.9 (Labelling of) mismatches between individual needs and social conditions

If a person cannot meet basic or vital needs in his or her environment, friction occurs between individual needs (demand) and (social) environment (supply). When the individual is not able to change this, and neither ignoring nor fleeing helps, the situation becomes problematic. The problems can vary in type and form, and may become persistent.

If a person seeks professional help, he or she will present his problem in terms of the specific discipline and practice of the consulted professional. Problems may be presented (and analysed) in the form of physical complaints to a doctor, as a mental disorder to a psychologist, as an offence or crime to the police, as legal issues to a lawyer, or as psychosocial problems to a social case worker. If other individuals have similar problems, they can be presented as collective or social problems to a sociologist, to a community worker, to a city council, or to a lawyer. Issues addressed by specific experts are 'diagnosed' based on initial assessment and analysis of the presenting problem. If the diagnosis falls under the realm of the professional's competency, the problem will be treated accordingly by that expert. If the diagnosis is beyond the expertise of that professional, the client will be referred to the appropriate specialist. In treatment, the person seeking help – the *problem owner* – is assigned a role respective to the discipline of the helping professional:

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patient, client, victim, customer, or citizen. If the help is accepted, the individual is expected to behave according to the assigned role.

Labelling or diagnosing an individual's problem is a subjective activity between the person with the presenting problem and the helping professional. This is a critical moment in the helping process. There is a greater risk of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (making things happen that you expect to see happening) if the diagnosis or analysis is not conducted according to professional standards, is inaccurate, or is incomplete.

If a problematic interaction between individuals and their environment becomes manifest in the form of physical and mental complaints, the involvement of various specialists may be necessary for a complete diagnosis and an appropriate, effective solution. In practice, this can not always be fully realized, and is definitely not 'automatic'. However, at present this is happening more often, because of a greater awareness and knowledge of the interaction between the individual and his environment. In other words, a holistic approach has become more common amongst professionals in health care, social work, and related fields. For this reason, there is more time and effort invested in coordination, cooperation, and interdisciplinary work than ever before.

Figure 2.10 shows the division of tasks developed, over time, between health care workers and workers in the three major fields of social work.

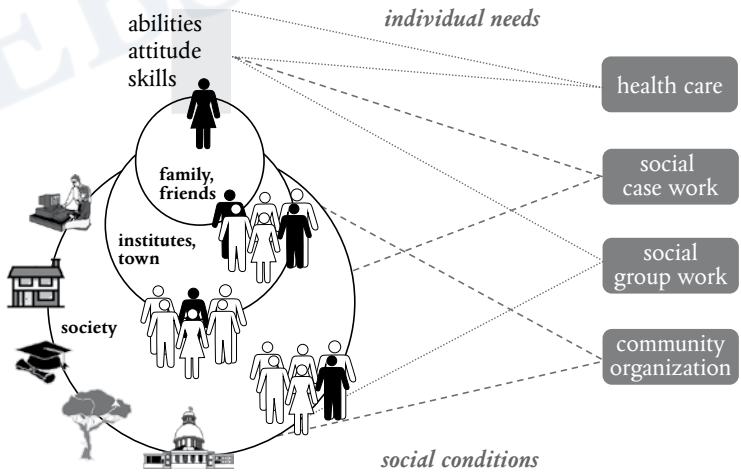

Figure 2.10 Division of tasks between health care and social care

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Institutions and professionals in health care aim to alleviate or cure physical and mental ailments of people under their treatment and care. Social workers focus on the interaction between individuals and their environment. The social case worker practises face to face, in small groups on a micro level, and also partly on a meso level. The community worker and group worker are oriented to specific social groups, of (organized) citizens, resident groups, and day groups in institutions. These workers advocate for, facilitate, and support initiatives and actions to improve the everyday life situations of clients and citizens. They also empower their clients to have an influence on policy and functioning of institutes, public authorities, and the public opinion.

The column of professional fields on the right-hand side of the figure is in order of their occurrence in history. Their rise and success is more or less a result of the growing social awareness of social influence on mankind, and of the interaction between the individual and his environment. This is in accordance with the process of civilization and science, whereby social sciences appeared at the end of the 19th century and began blossoming after 1945.

2.6.6 Problem solving and compensation

If someone is not able to fulfil important needs in his social environment, he may be hampered in his development and could end up in a problematic situation. To solve, reduce, or prevent such problems, the person must take action, and if necessary, utilize the help of others (see Figure 2.11). This is no simple task. After all, even when an individual ends up in an undesirable situation against his will, most of the time he has also played a role in creating or contributing to the problem himself. Even when others may be mostly to blame, the individual always has at least some involvement in the problem, by way of wrong estimations at crucial moments and/or questionable decision making. It can be hard to accept one's own failures and/or to admit that a situation or relationship developed differently than expected. If a person loses his partner, child, or other important person in his life, or if a person loses his job, or fails to finish his studies, it can be very difficult to accept the loss or failure. Often people are ashamed to admit their problems, because they fear they will be judged or considered weak. Therefore, people often feel the need to hide their problems from others.

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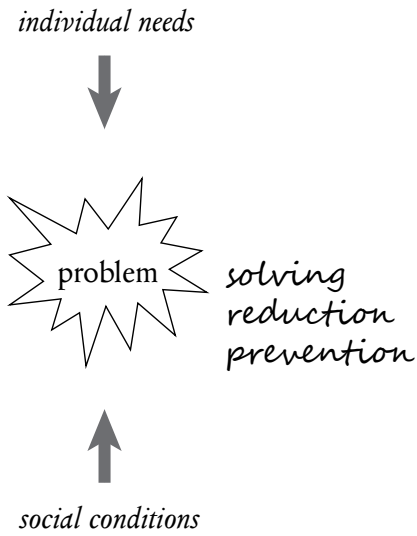

Figure 2.11 Mismatches, problems, and solutions

Because it can be difficult to generate solutions by oneself, quite often people seek the help of a third party. This may be a friend, family member, or neighbour, or possibly a helping professional. In many cases the family doctor is the first professional consulted, then (if people are religious) a pastor, priest or imam, and thirdly, sometimes, a social worker or psychologist.

Asking for help is the crucial first step in the process of changing an individual's situation and finding a solution to one's problems. This is commonly preceded by a painful process and struggle as an individual achieves self-awareness. It is important that volunteer and professional helpers realize that the request for help comes at the end of this difficult process. Itself, recognition of one's need for help is a meaningful step toward finding a solution. To solve, reduce, and prevent further problems, the person seeking help and the actors in his environment need to develop a willingness to see things from a new perspective, behave differently, and cooperate with each other.

I focus here on a goal-oriented process of (behavioural) change that takes place in a specified time-frame, and is meant to change the present adverse circumstances into a desired situation in the end.

However, not all people in distress come to the realization that they need help, or do not always choose to ask for help, and sometimes may

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not be in the right time or place in their lives to get help. This may be especially true for people seeking to escape or those who remain oblivious of their problems through alcohol, drugs, or other addictions. There are also people who descend into psychoses, people who cut themselves off from the world, and people who may even desire to end their lives just to escape the pain they feel and the problems they face.

Helping professionals are confronted with a variety of people in all sorts of situations and in differen states of mind.

They are expected to act according to their professional standards, and to have the necessary knowledge, means, and facilities to competently assist their clients and patients. Most of them do, and do well.

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3. Development and Change

As people grow and develop, they are in continuous interaction with their environment. If an individual's personal development stagnates and he ends up in undesirable circumstances, the need for change or improvement in his situation arises.

A task of social work is to support individuals, groups, and communities that are in need of such change or improvement. For this reason, the concepts of *development*, *change*, and *improvement* are key words in social work. The phenomenon of *change* in particular is a central concept. In fact, social workers are sometimes referred to as *change agents* (IFSW 2000, p.1).

In this chapter I will discuss the concepts of development, change, and improvement and their relation to one another (Section 3.1), followed by a detailed, didactically constructed overview of various aspects of the central concept of change (Section 3.2). After a historical overview of the theory of planned change (Section 3.3), I give a systematic explanation of a social worker's professional actions, in the form of interventions, aimed at creating change (Section 3.4.1 to 3.4.3). In Section 3.4.4 I place the interventions within the wider methodical and strategic framework to which they belong. I end this chapter with an integrative approach of *social interventions* and forms of *self-control* and *self-steering* based on current theoretical models in social work and connected with the international definition of social work (Section 3.4.5).

3.1 About developing, changing, and improving

The word 'change' has many definitions. In social work, change is perceived as the transformation process from one situation or condition to another. From a time perspective, the existing situation here and now (the situation that has to be changed) is called the starting point, while

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the situation that social workers attempt to create with and for client(s) (the desired situation) is called the end point. Movement from a starting point to an end point occurs over time, through a transition process or change process.

Change can occur spontaneously, or can be the outcome of a transition process, carefully planned and implemented. A *spontaneous change* is the result of unorganized, random actions and circumstances which mutually influence one another. A *planned change* is the result of goal-oriented, deliberate actions and influenced conditions.

A changed situation or changed conditions can be experienced as an improvement, as a decline, or as neutral, depending on who is affected or confronted with the change. The perception may differ between persons, groups, organizations, or communities. In the case of spontaneous change, it is sometimes questionable who, and to what extent, is better or worse off, and who remains unaffected. In the case of planned change, one tries to create end circumstances that improve the situation or position respective to the previous starting situation. If the desired situation is actually achieved (change processes can fail or not, or work out differently from planned) the 'changer' will experience an improvement in the previous position, situation, or conditions. The question remains as to how the changed situation affects other persons involved, as their experiences may be very different from the 'changer's' experience. This may result in change-oriented action from the other people affected. This reaction is a potential threat to the newly realized situation of the 'changer', and may result in a reversal of the original change.

The opposite of change is continuance: leaving the situation as it is. The latter is not necessarily 'conservative' or 'negative'; neither is striving for change, by definition, always 'progressive' or 'good'.

Change and continuance are relative concepts that can be undone or reversed. Continuance provides security, and a steady, predictable pattern, but change may become necessary to preserve important goods or maintain/uphold values. Nothing remains stagnant; rather, the entire world and the whole universe are in a constant state of evolving and developing.

Humans cannot function without either constancy or change, therefore both change and continuance exist on all levels. Change is challenging and necessary at times, but can also result in unrest and uncertainty. Without change, things may become boring and predictable. However, maintaining constancy may provide stability, security, and

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